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Dyess AFB demonstrates B-1B's upgrades, combat capabilities

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8/19/2005 - **DYESS AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFPN)** -- The 337th Test and Evaluation Squadron here set a number of “firsts” recently for the B-1B Lancer.

DYESS AIR FORCE BASE, Texas -- A B-1B from the 337th Test and Evaluation Squadron here releases a Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile over the White Sands Missile Range, N.M. The 7th Bomb Wing here became the first unit to achieve initial operational capability of the JASSM cruise missile Aug. 18, which means the missile is able to be used in combat operations. (U.S. Air Force photo)

Those 'firsts' were demonstrated July 25 over the White Sands Missile Range, N.M., when two Lancers from Dyess auto-released a Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile as well as three dissimilar weapons from the same launcher.

The 7th Bomb Wing became the first unit to achieve initial operational capability of the JASSM cruise missile Aug. 18, which means the missile is able to be used in combat operations.

"This is a great step forward for the B-1 community and represents a tremendous leap in capability," said Lt. Col. Pete VanDeusen, 337th TES commander.

The JASSM, or AGM-158A, is an air-to-surface, single warhead self-propelled missile. The July 25 launch continued the bomber's perfect record for JASSM launches when it struck its target after traveling more than 170 nautical miles.

The mission's success was made possible by the final testing of new offensive avionics software designated as Sustainment Block 10, said Capt. Janette Ho, a 337th TES instructor weapons system officer and SB-10 project officer. An enhanced version of the Lancer’s flight software, SB-10 provides advanced weapons patterning capability and the ability to load more than one type of weapon in each of the B-1’s three weapons bays.

"In the past, a set of target coordinates had to be entered for every guided weapon prior to release," Captain Ho said. "With block-10, I can specify (the) number of weapons in a linear or circular spacing around a single set of coordinates, greatly improving the ability to strike a maneuvering target."

In addition to carrying one JASSM each, both B-1Bs used in the White Sands demonstration carried 28 MK-82 500-pound free-fall, general purpose “dumb” bombs, one GBU-38 500-pound Global Positioning System-guided Joint Direct Attack Munitions, one GBU-31 2,000-pound GPS-guided JDAM, and an MK-84 2,000-pound general purpose "dumb" bomb, said Capt. Scott Higginbotham, a 337th TES Lancer pilot who participated in the mission.

Prior to the White Sands demonstration, the B-1B and 337th TES accomplished another first June 21 when a Lancer over the Gulf of Mexico dropped guided cluster weapons on a moving maritime target in support of Sinking Exercise East.

SINKEX East is the latest in a series of Air Force Chief of Staff-sponsored maritime interdiction exercises to demonstrate the Air Force's capability to strike targets at sea.

"(The) flight was a superb demonstration of the B-1's ability to effectively track and engage maritime targets," said Capt. Jeff Miller, SINKEX East project officer at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

The flight was the culmination of a six-month test to evaluate the maritime role of an anti-tank weapon, the Cluster Bomb Unit-105 wind corrected munitions dispenser, Colonel VanDeusen said. The test also evaluated the B-1's use of its moving target radar mode to find, track and successfully target three remotely controlled motor boats on three separate runs prior to releasing two weapons in a single pass.

After proving the B-1's capability in its mission over land and water, Colonel VanDeusen said the B-1's future looks bright.

"The B-1 is already a combat-proven platform," Colonel VanDeusen said. "These recent upgrades only increase the B-1's agility, payload, and loiter capability for the combatant commanders."

The JASSM platform is part of the B-1 Joint Standoff Weapon/JASSM Integration (JJI) program, an extension of the B-1B's Block E system upgrades and one part of the overall B-1B conventional mission upgrade program, officials said. The JASSM was designed to penetrate highly defended airspace as an independent cruise missile in order to eliminate high-value fixed targets.

Officials said that once completed, the B-1B will have the largest JASSM capability in the Air Force with a maximum capacity of 24 missiles. Other platforms that are capable of carrying the JASSM are the B-52 Stratofortress, the B-2 Spirit, the F-117 Nighthawk and the F-16 Fighting Falcon.